

Constantine's Death and Character 3*3

be baptised in Jordan: God had willed otherwise and he bowed to His will. But he assured them that his resolve was not due to any passing whim. He had fully made up his mind, that even if recovery were vouchsafed him, he would set before himself such rules and conduct of life * as would be becoming to God.

Eusebius of Nicomedia then performed the rite of baptism. Constantine, clad in garments of shining white, lay upon a white bed, and, down to the hour of his death, refused to touch the purple robes he had worn in life. " Now," he exclaimed, with all the fervour of a neophyte, " now I know in very truth that I am blessed; now I have confidence that I am a partaker of divine light." When his captains came to take leave of him and wept at the thought of losing their chief, he told them that he had the assurance of having been found worthy of eternal life, and that his only anxiety was to hasten his journey to God. He wished to die, and the wish was soon granted. Constantine drew his last breath on May 22d, 337.

They bore the body, enclosed in a golden coffin covered by a purple pall, from Nicomedia to Constantinople and placed it with great pomp in the throne room of the palace. There the dead Emperor lay in state, guarded night and day by the chief officers of the army and the highest officials of the court. Even in death, says Eusebius, he still was king, and all the elaborate bowings and genuflexions with which men had entered his presence

* *BedjiiovS ri&rxj ftiov Qe<& sitovrat tyiavrw*